

Message

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Subject: USS Lead - Press

East Chicago press clips
US EPA Region 5 – prepared by the Office of Public Affairs
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<https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/indiana/articles/2017-04-04/epa-chief-pruitt-to-visit-east-chicago-superfund-site>

EPA Chief Pruitt to Visit East Chicago Superfund Site

Indiana officials say U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt will visit a lead-contaminated Superfund site in East Chicago later this month.
 | April 4, 2017, at 5:29 p.m.

AP

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Indiana officials say U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt will visit a lead-contaminated Superfund site in East Chicago later this month.
 U.S. Sens. Joe Donnelly and Todd Young, U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky and Gov. Eric J. Holcomb announced the April 19 visit on Tuesday. Each had invited Pruitt to visit the site after President Donald Trump appointed him to the position.
 The EPA said last month that it was preparing to begin remediation work on nearly 200 properties within the Superfund site that have high concentrations of lead and arsenic in the soil. The site includes the Chicago suburb's Calumet neighborhood, where about a thousand people lived in a public housing complex.
 Holcomb has declared the area a disaster emergency.

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/post-tribune/news/>
EPA's Scott Pruitt planning visit to East Chicago
Craig Lyons Post-Tribune

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's top administrator plans to visit East Chicago as the city wrestles with ongoing remediation work at the U.S.S. Lead Superfund site.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt will visit the city on April 19, according to Sen. Todd Young, R-Bloomington, after being invited by Indiana's congressional delegation and Gov. Eric Holcomb. Pruitt's visit will come weeks before the EPA is set to resume remediation work in the Calumet neighborhood and as residents of the West Calumet Housing Complex continue to move because of the contamination.

"This administration has shown that it wants to bring a swift resolution to a problem that has lingered for too long," said Young, in a statement. "Administrator Pruitt has not only pledged to visit the site, but also to ensure his agency is working closely with city and state officials to develop and execute a coordinated plan."

Details of Pruitt's visit were not available Tuesday.

Senators Joe Donnelly, D-South Bend, Young, and Visclosky invited Pruitt and HUD Secretary Ben Carson to visit East Chicago to see why the agencies' continued support is necessary.

"We think that visiting with the residents in the impacted areas to get a first-hand perspective of the challenges facing the community will help you as you lead your agencies' response efforts," the delegation wrote in the letter. "Children from the area have tested positive for dangerous levels of lead in their blood and the area's residents now have to worry how their own back yards are impacting their families' health. It is a situation that needs continued assistance from the federal government."

In February, Holcomb approved a disaster declaration for East Chicago to bolster efforts to assist residents affected by lead and arsenic contamination around the U.S.S. Lead Superfund site. As a part of that declaration, state officials would ask the EPA for funding to replace lead pipes at the Superfund site.

At Holcomb's direction, Indiana state agencies have already begun providing assistance to the city, including relocation assistance for the residents of the West Calumet Housing Complex and pledging to provide water filters to residents in the remainder of the Superfund site.

"I appreciate Administrator Pruitt's willingness to visit the East Chicago community," said Holcomb. "From the onset I've pledged to bring all that is at our disposal to bear, and we're continuing to work through the executive order to coordinate services and response efforts with local, state and federal partners. Together we remain vigilant in identifying needs, pursuing additional resources and continuing relocation efforts for affected residents."

Holcomb met with Pruitt in Washington in February. In a followup letter, the governor not only reiterated the request to visit the city but also to see that the EPA expedites indoor cleaning of residents contaminated by lead and arsenic; increases the available funding for lead service line replacement; and ensure that remediation work is coordinated with the city's plans to replace lead service lines at the Superfund site.

Both Donnelly and Visclosky lauded Pruitt's decision to visit East Chicago to see the assistance the residents and city need because of the lead and arsenic contamination throughout the Calumet neighborhood.

"I thank Sen. Donnelly, Sen. Young, and Gov. Holcomb for their leadership on this issue, and I look forward to continuing to collaborate with Mayor Copeland on addressing the immediate needs of East Chicago residents and remedying the underlying environmental issues," Visclosky said, in a statement. "I am pleased that Administrator Pruitt is taking the time to see first-hand the individuals of the Calumet community who are in need of his agency's deliberate attention and fulsome work."

"I'm very pleased that Administrator Pruitt has taken us up on our invitation to visit East Chicago to see the Superfund site and to hear directly from residents," Donnelly said, in a statement. "Hundreds of Hoosier families have had to leave their homes and others are now worried about how their own backyards may be impacting their health."

"The federal government needs to get this cleanup right, and visiting will provide Administrator Pruitt with a first-hand perspective of the challenges residents are facing and help him understand the situation," Donnelly said.

http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/lake/epa-s-scott-pruitt-to-visit-east-chicago/article_4142b92c-476d-5c5a-aa2e-e8247c4aeaab.html

EPA's Scott Pruitt to visit East Chicago

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EAST CHICAGO — Scott Pruitt, the new head of the Environmental Protection Agency, will visit East Chicago this month, where residents and local, state and federal officials are grappling with a lead crisis, according to a news release from U.S. Sen. Todd Young, R-Indiana.

Young, along with U.S. Senator Joe Donnelly, D-Ind., U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky, D-Merrillville, and Indiana Gov. Eric J. Holcomb each had invited Pruitt to visit the lead- and arsenic-contaminated USS Lead Superfund site after his recently appointment to the position.

The EPA's Superfund site has been the focus for local, state and federal officials since the magnitude of the environmental contamination became clear last summer.

Pruitt will visit April 19. Details will be announced at a later date.

"This administration has shown that it wants to bring a swift resolution to a problem that has lingered for too long," Young, who will be making his third visit to East Chicago, said in the news release. "Administrator Pruitt has not only pledged to visit the site, but also to ensure his agency is working closely with city and state officials to develop and execute a coordinated plan."

Holcomb late last year signed an executive order, declaring the site an emergency disaster zone. The additional state assistance is helping local housing officials relocate the remaining families from the West Calumet Housing Complex, secure money to demolish the complex, and other aid.

His predecessor, now-Vice President Mike Pence, was heavily criticized for not issuing an executive order during his time in office.

"I appreciate Administrator Pruitt's willingness to visit the East Chicago community," Holcomb said in the news release. "From the onset I've pledged to bring all that is at our disposal to bear, and we're continuing to work through the executive order to coordinate services and response efforts with local, state and federal partners. Together we remain vigilant in identifying needs, pursuing additional resources and continuing relocation efforts for affected residents."

Visclosky said in the release he is "pleased" that Pruitt is taking the time to see firsthand the families of the Calumet community in need of assistance.

Donnelly said hundreds of families have to leave their homes in the West Calumet Housing Complex. He also noted how others are now worried about how "their own backyards may be impacting their health."

"The federal government needs to get this cleanup right, and visiting will provide Administrator Pruitt with a first-hand perspective of the challenges residents are facing and help him understand the situation," Donnelly said.

http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/indiana-senate-votes---to-address-east-chicago-lead/article_5de6a3a6-c20e-5977-84a9-cdc21f146ce6.html

Indiana Senate votes 48-0 to address East Chicago lead issues

- [Dan Carden dan.carden@nwi.com, 317-637-9078](mailto:dan.carden@nwi.com)
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- Apr 4, 2017 Updated 40 min ago INDIANAPOLIS — A plan to indefinitely continue enhanced state assistance for lead-impacted areas of East Chicago was approved 48-0 Tuesday by the Indiana Senate.

House Bill 1344, sponsored by state Rep. Earl Harris, Jr., D-East Chicago, largely mirrors Gov. Eric Holcomb's current East Chicago emergency declaration by designating neighborhoods contaminated by past lead manufacturing operations as "areas of special concern."

If enacted into law, state agencies would be directed to continue working in those areas with their federal counterparts to relocate residents and remove or remediate soil tainted by lead or arsenic.

It also would require the Indiana Department of Environmental Management to annually test East Chicago's water supply to confirm it complies with federal lead and copper limits for drinking water.

"This is one piece of a very big puzzle that's being put together and addressed up in East Chicago," said state Sen. Ed Charbonneau, R-Valparaiso, the Senate sponsor.

State Sen. Lonnie Randolph, D-East Chicago, who grew up near the Superfund site, called the lead contamination issue a four-decade "catastrophe" that needs to be corrected "to make the city whole again."

"I appreciate any and everything that you can possibly do," Randolph said.

The legislation now returns to the House for lawmakers to either consent to Senate amendments, which would advance it to Holcomb, or to send the proposal to a conference committee for further revision.

<http://www.chicagoreader.com/Bleeder/archives/2017/04/04/some-east-chicago-residents-fleeing-lead-contamination-are-being-moved-to-chicagos-toxic-doughnut>

Some East Chicago residents fleeing lead contamination are being moved to Chicago's 'toxic doughnut'

Posted By [Kevin Stark](#) today at 02:07 PM

Akeeshea Daniels pulls an emergency relocation letter from the East Chicago Housing Authority out of a thick folder of documents. She points to where it says that the city of East Chicago has hired movers "to transport your belongings." The destination? Altgeld Gardens, the far-south-side public housing development once dubbed Chicago's "toxic doughnut" because of its proximity to landfills, sewage treatment plants, and toxic chemical factories—a surprising destination for a family fleeing a home contaminated with lead and arsenic.

The upcoming relocation of roughly 50 families—Daniels's included—from the lead-contaminated West Calumet Housing Complex is the latest chapter in an ongoing crisis. In August, East Chicago mayor Anthony Copeland sent a letter to West Calumet's approximately 1,100 residents informing them that they were being exposed to toxic metals in the ground around their homes. They needed to move, Copeland wrote, and the public housing complex would be demolished.

The majority of residents have now left, but those who remained received emergency transfer mailers on March 20; around 30 families were told that they would be moved to Illinois, although at least nine families have since found permanent housing elsewhere.

But the news that at least three families would be moved to Altgeld Gardens, with its decades-long history of fighting the disproportionate impact of pollution on its residents, came as a shock to many.

Sherry Hunter, an organizer with Calumet Lives Matter, grew up in East Chicago and lives a short distance from West Calumet. A close friend of Daniels's, Hunter is concerned about her moving to Altgeld Gardens.

"They are surrounded by industrial plants," she says. "There are no stores. They are in the middle of all of these industrial areas and railroads. There is more industry around there than there is here."

If residents weren't happy with their relocation assignment, they had until yesterday to file a grievance with the housing authority; otherwise they'll be forced to move starting today.

East Chicago housing officials didn't return calls for comment on this story and haven't released numbers as to how many families will be moved to Altgeld Gardens as opposed to Wentworth Gardens, a public housing complex located near Sox Park or elsewhere in Illinois.

Moving across state lines also poses special challenges, says Emily Coffey, an attorney with the Sargent Shriver Center on National Poverty Law who's representing the families. Such a move could "upend support networks and cause families to go without vital services." Parents could lose their jobs, school will be disrupted, and badly needed health care could be put in jeopardy. "No one should be forced to move to another state," she says.

In November, Coffey reached a settlement in a civil rights complaint filed with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development that alleged systemic housing discrimination on the part the East Chicago Housing Authority. HUD has provided the East Chicago Housing Authority with \$1.9 million to administer housing vouchers, provide relocation counselors, and pay for other moving expenses.

A HUD spokesperson wrote in an e-mail that the situation in East Chicago is "ever changing," and noted that more homes in East Chicago have become available since the emergency mailer was sent out. A move to Illinois would be temporary and a last resort, the spokesperson wrote, as residents could continue to search for permanent housing in Indiana if they wanted.

"HUD's desire is that these families do not have to cross state lines if at all possible," the spokesperson wrote, "but it will ultimately depend on how many units are available in East Chicago. . . . Hopefully all or most families who want to ultimately remain in Indiana will be able to do so."

But East Chicago doesn't have enough affordable housing for all the residents of West Calumet— a fact that became clear in the early days of the crisis. And residents attempting to move complain of landlords that refuse to accept the housing vouchers—a kind of discrimination that's illegal if common in Chicago but not expressly forbidden in Indiana. And paradoxically, some residents want to stay, despite the danger posed by exposure to lead and arsenic.

West Calumet was built in the 1960s and '70s atop a defunct lead smelter. Even at low levels of exposure, lead attacks the central nervous system of children and can disrupt brain development, cause shortened attention spans, and lead to hypertension, impaired kidneys, and poor academic performance.

The arrival of warm spring weather means that children will be eager to venture outside—even though the city says it's too dangerous for them to play in their yards.

Altgeld, meanwhile, is known as the birthplace of the environmental justice movement, thanks to the efforts of activist Hazel Johnson, who worked for decades to bring attention to the effects of pollution on the mostly African-American residents of her community. President Barack Obama began his career as a organizer there, working with residents to strip the housing complex of asbestos.

Today, Johnson's daughter, Cheryl Johnson, continues her mother's work as the head of the grassroots advocacy group People for Community Recovery. Although the Chicago Housing Authority just finished renovating more than 200 units in Altgeld, Cheryl says she's worried about East Chicago children moving to an area where the air quality is poor and there are still environmental hazards.

"At least I know those are lead-safe homes for families to move into," she says.

In the basement of the public library, Daniels wonders aloud what life will be like in Altgeld Gardens. She hasn't visited yet, and didn't know anything about it until she searched the Internet for the address she found on her letter. She doesn't own a car, and doesn't know how she'll get to the supermarket, or where her kids will go to the doctor's office- or even where those places are in Chicago.

"I'm not happy with that," she says.

Located 16 miles south of the Loop and bound by railroad tracks, expressways, and a turn of the Little Calumet River, Riverdale, the community that's home to Altgeld, is one of Chicago's most isolated neighborhoods. Only a single bus, the 34 South Michigan, picks up nearby-a far cry from East Chicago, where public transportation is free and more abundant. Many of the neighborhood's working residents spend more than an hour commuting.

The East Chicago Housing Authority has said it will provide transportation so that East Chicago students can finish out the school year without transferring schools, but Daniels is skeptical.

"There is no written plan for us as parents," she says.

The housing authority hasn't, however, made a similar offer to job seekers. At 41 percent, Riverdale has one of the city's highest unemployment rates, and the neighborhood lacks job opportunities.

"We are still going through redevelopment," Johnson says.

Amenities are also in short supply.

"We have a liquor store and a fast food joint, but we don't have a grocery store," says Johnson. "We have a small market. They can buy milk and meat products, but we don't have a full-fledged store."

Still, Johnson says, "Our arms are open."

"We'll get you the resources that you need," she says, addressing West Calumet's residents directly. "Have trust and faith in god and community and you'll be alright."

West Calumet residents, she says, "are welcome in Altgeld Gardens."

Sincerely,

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